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El uso de Anchor para mejorar las destrezas orales,  
motivación y creatividad de los estudiantes

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**Trabajo de Fin de Máster**

# **The use of Anchor to enhance students' speaking skills, motivation and creativity**

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## **ABSTRACT**

These days, developing students' oral skills is key when trying to fully master a language. Numerous students present difficulties in the learning process such as inhibition or fright to make mistakes during a conversation. However, the main cause of English teaching failure is the lack of motivation between high school students. This paper aims to give insight about recent studies on this problem and suggest a solution to this dilemma by making use of technology in class and introducing a new kind of activities by using *Anchor*, an application that can make increase motivation and students to practice their speaking with podcasts and share them to their peers.

Key words: podcast, second language acquisition, EFL, motivation.

## **RESUMEN**

Actualmente, el desarrollo de la destreza oral en la asignatura de inglés es clave a la hora de controlar un lenguaje. Numerosos estudiantes presentan dificultades durante el proceso de aprendizaje como la cohibición y el miedo a cometer errores durante una conversación. Sin embargo, la principal deficiencia de la enseñanza del inglés es la falta de motivación en los estudiantes. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo dar luz acerca de estudios recientes sobre este tema y sugerir una solución a esta disyuntiva mediante el uso de tecnología en la clase e introduciendo un nuevo tipo de actividades que usan *Anchor*, una aplicación que puede hacer que aumente la motivación en los estudiantes y que estos practiquen su destreza oral con el uso de podcasts y la distribución a sus compañeros.

Palabras clave: podcast, adquisición de segundo lenguaje, EFL, motivación.





*"The task of education is not to teach subjects: it is to teach students."*

Ken Robinson.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, English language is so important that it has become a worldwide *lingua franca*. As a result, the study of this language is key in forging a brighter future for young learners. Spanish educational system provides the opportunity to learn English as a foreign language but sometimes teachers do not make the most of the subject and the learning process is not rather enriching for students.

The reason for the choice of the theme for this master's dissertation is the fact that the speaking part of the subject is not fully developed in high schools, and also, technology should be more integrated in EFL teaching. There is a number of students that do not like this or other subject because they find it quite difficult to keep the learning pace or because of the lack of motivation from the teachers or the educational centre. When some students finish their high school studies, they present writing or reading skills more developed than their fluency and speaking accuracy. Perhaps, they know advanced and specific vocabulary but lack simpler and more useful lexicon when it comes to have a basic conversation. So, how could this problem be tackled?

Maybe, one possible solution is the introduction of more technological solutions and applications in the EFL classroom. A foreign language is acquired with practice so, as a result, fostering motivation and creating long language input in and outside the classroom are key factors for teaching success. What teachers need to create is a purpose for which students feel the desire to communicate in the target language. Consequently, this paper presents an intervention proposal based on the creation of podcasts by using a new application, *Anchor.fm*, so that students work and practice their speaking skills.

This innovation proposal is going to give light about the introduction of these kind of activities in the EFL classroom. First of all, the project's objectives are going to be provided in order to understand the direction that this proposal is going to continue. After this, the theoretical framework section will give

information about how technology has shaped today's way of teaching in schools around the world. Also, some background is shown concerning the definition of podcasting and the possibilities that it offers not only in education, but more specifically in the EFL subject. Then, the purpose of the state of the art is to give insight about the recent studies about use of podcasts in EFL teaching and the explanation of the application *Anchor*. The next section is related to the implementation of the innovative proposal of podcasting in an actual class, concerning the contents, assessment criteria, timing, sessions and activities. After this, the discussion section will provide insight about the potential advantages and disadvantages of podcasting in class and, finally, the conclusions reached after the completion of this proposal.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

This final master's dissertation is aimed to achieve several objectives by means of this innovation proposal. The main of them is to design an intervention proposal to help Baccalaureate students feel more motivated while practicing their speaking and therefore, improving this skill. This would be achieved by making use of an innovative technological tool to record podcasts, *Anchor*.

In addition, the literature review of this dissertation aims to cover a number of theoretical aspects concerning the use of technology in education, and more specifically in the English classroom, everything as an enriching background that will eventually be useful to comprehend the key aspects of the intervention proposal.

What is more, another general objective sought in this paper is the specification of the curriculum that is designed to be introduced in an educational centre. That is, some methodologies are thought to be acquired during the teaching and learning processes, both individually personalised, and group focused. This curriculum would introduce several types of activities that would contribute to the students' academical progress as well as to English teaching innovation.

On the other hand, I personally look for acquiring some specific goals in this paper such as transforming the curriculum into an activity program focused on technological speaking practice, gaining experience in creating educational material and its planning, as well as in the assessment. After this, another objective is to set up a proposal through which a friendly and comfortable atmosphere is established in order to obtain a fruitful learning outcome.

Besides, by working in this master's dissertation, I look forward to acquiring a mastering of both oral and written educational expression in order to use them in a future teaching experience. The outcome of this paper will provide some conclusions on which I can reflect about how to foster technology-based teaching, as well as increasing the learners' motivation in the English classroom. This reflection is high necessary for this proposal because it will lead directly to the improvement of the educational system.



### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section is going to provide an approach on the matters concerning the use of technological resources in the classroom and how they can be implemented in the ESL context. After that, some insight is given about the particular introduction of podcasts in education as well as its use in order to learn English.

#### **3.1. The use of technology in the classroom**

Information and communication technologies, and more specifically computer technology, first emerged during the 1950's and 1960's and since then, they have been gradually increasing its influence over the world. However, it was not until the last 15 years when the ICT started to entail a revolution in our lives, creating new sociocultural contexts in which we interact with other people differently than before. Computer technology, and more particularly mobile technology, now allow a direct exchange of information as well as the immediate communication between people.

As a result, since technology allows teachers and students to easily access information, it also affects education. In this sense, Levin & Wadmany argue that:

ICT creates new possibilities, dilemmas, and directions and encourages teachers to harness the new opportunities that ICT offers to make teaching and learning more meaningful and rewarding. The ability to utilize information and communication technology has become the new literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As such, new technologies call into question many of our long-held assumptions about education. (2008, p.234).

Therefore, this new “literacy” creates new paths for both teachers and students through which they can change the educational context as a whole. These possibilities such as information retrieval, content sharing and creativity mean that technology may clash with the traditional concept of education for some teachers.

According to Levin & Wadmany (2008), the aim of developing a new type of education by means of technological support has increased in school since the early 1980's. Despite this, after the big investment schools and governments

make in ICT upgrades in the classrooms, little advance is made in the system's quality. Moreover, the teachers and how they use these technologies in class have a key role in this revolution. The reality is that the incorporation of ICT is has been going in an unhurried way because teachers use them to combine with the traditional methods, avoiding as a result the transformation of the teaching practices. In relation to this, Levin & Wadmany declare that:

[...] classroom practice focuses on computer skills rather than integrated learning intentions, and often teachers' practices relate more to issues of management and organization than to learning and assessment. Teachers still lack the confidence to exploit ICT for new teaching approaches. (2008, p.235).

This lack of confidence and reluctance to change make teachers to use technology and technological devices in a tedious and boring way, merely for presentations and adaptations for the curriculum.

Furthermore, according to Kumar, Rose & D'Silva (2008), there have been research studies about how teachers implement these technologies in the classroom, and they have shown that its correct application is the key constituent in order to improve the performance of the students. Following this, they state that "educational technology is not, and never will be, transformative on its own - it requires teachers who can integrate technology into curriculum and use it to improve student learning" (2008, p. 605).

Even though the use of ICT is vital within schools nowadays, there is a significant resistant or opposition by a number of teachers. In the study carried out by Kumar, Rose & D'Silva (2008), they conclude that the administration along with the school's authorities should provide incentives and reduce problems such as bureaucracy or the school policies. Apart from these external factors, after years of research on this matter, Bitner & Bitner (2002) show a range of eight key areas useful for integrating technology into the classroom and tackling the problem of unsuccessful ICT integration:

1. Fear of change for teachers.
2. Training in basics of computer use.
3. Personal productivity skills.
4. Teaching models for the teachers so that they understand the concept.

5. Learning based for both teacher and learner.
6. Climate that allows failure with no bad connotations.
7. Motivation to put up with frustration to changes.
8. Support, both technological and curricular.

After this, of course it is also crucial to take into account the money available, the involvement of the teacher and the time required to develop the changes. Without them, the combination of technology into the curriculum cannot be efficient for the system.

### **3.2. Technological support in the EFL classroom**

Naturally, one of the most important technological devices to incorporate into the English as a foreign language classroom (EFL) is the computer. Nowadays, computer technology is evidently present in EFL teaching and learning processes because it can provide a wide range of benefits for this subject.

According to Mujtaba & Mubarak (2013), computer is a basic tool when dealing with the listening comprehension skill. The most important features students encounter are the fact that immediate feedback is available as well as the chance to bring in real language situations through videos, podcasts and social networks, specially directly from the internet. Thus, the obvious main objective is to find and present the most authentic conversation contexts.

Moreover, computers and internet could enhance the learners' speaking skills. One possible strategy, as exposed by Mujtaba & Mubarak (2013) could be the straight interaction with a native speaker by using social media sites such as Skype, Yahoo or Facebook, always within a friendly learning environment. Additionally, Ybarra & Green (2003) argue that computer book reading in groups promotes rich verbal interaction between the young learners, because they find it more interesting and engaging.

As for the writing skill, both Mujtaba & Mubarak (2013) and Ybarra & Green (2003) agree that word processing software can help students develop this ability and the vocabulary knowledge. This can be executed for instance through email sending activities, which entail an actual context of communication. However, one of the disadvantages that Ybarra & Green specify is that the learner must feel confident first with both the language and the technological device. Furthermore, computers might rise the interest level for students to start reading in English.

Here, texts can be interactive and offer direct feedback to the student, as Ybarra & Green (2003) say. For example, a user can look up in the internet the meaning of a word much faster than in a dictionary. What is more, even games can contribute to the reading enhancing as well as the listening and the rest.

Apart from this, technology is also available to help the teacher in the teaching process. For instance, as Morgan (2008) argue, if teachers follow a focus on form (FonF) instruction, they can make use of tools such as PowerPoint in order to show the contents in a clear way to the students. This software and other ones allow the educator to “introduce adjectives impressively through font size, color and animation. Students are eager to focus on form when the slides show vocabulary/adjectives that are Big, small, red, and beautiful (with animation)” (2008). Since PowerPoint’s electronic templates are minimalist, they make the communication between the teacher and the class clearer more effective.

Besides, there are plenty of devices and applications that can be used effectively in the EFL classroom such as electronic boards, smart phones and tablets, quizzes, games or competitions. In this sense, the following sections are going to give some insight on how podcasts and the applications related to them are introduced in education.

### **3.3. Podcasts and education**

Essentially, a podcast is a recorded piece of audio, something which is not really new in education. What is new about this is that podcasts now “can bring together the advantages of audio and mobile learning to facilitate learning” (Edirisingha & Salmon, 2007). Nowadays there is a big variety of internet possibilities and software to create this kind of digital content, as well as saving and even sharing it online or directly to a certain amount of people.

Podcasts are mainly used to create content and offer it to a large audience who will listen it when they can in their computers or portable devices. For example, the main uses in higher education could be as Kamel, Maramba and Wheeler (2006) state: lecture recordings, specific explanations by the teacher or audio recordings of textbook content so that people can listen to them while walking. Basically, this case corresponds to the teacher creating content for the students. On the other hand, it is students who are able create the content within



the classroom. They can create them in order to share their opinions about anything, debate, and share knowledge, as well.

According to McGarr (2009), most of the literature that analyse podcasting declare that there are several main proposed benefits of its use in education, both in secondary and higher (university) like convenience and learning enhancement, flexibility and accessibility. Firstly, the use of podcasts to distribute content provides great flexibility for learners as they can access these materials from where and when they want. In addition, McGarr states that the ability to get to the content has increased the learning possibilities. Now, students are able to listen to the content from portable devices such as smart phones, tablets or MP3 players (although these ones are prone to disappear soon from the market). He calls it m-learning, a sort of learning which is obviously useful for distance or online learning programs. Also, McGarr throws in that podcasts are rapidly gaining acceptance mainly because they contribute to enhance and change the teaching-learning process. For instance, some institutions and teachers find it useful to distribute content in podcasts as complementary materials so, students can listen to them as many times as they want. However, this would be no different from uploading written material, so there would not be an actual advantage over that.

Besides, after the study carried out by Edirisingha & Salmon (2007) about the use of podcasts for specific pedagogical purposes, they present several pedagogical models that can be developed in class. In these models, teachers as well as students made use of the creation of podcasts. An instance of this is the support of online learning, which could be used in order to give updated information, guidance on activities and motivation for the students. Moreover, podcasts are used to give explanations and support for practical work, something which is linked to the model of the flipped classroom. Another model is also used to bring topical issues and informal content into the class. As Edirisingha & Salmon (2007) state, this is based in an inquiry teaching approach for which students created podcasts with the purpose of reviewing content and urging them to start debates. Also, podcasts allow to develop reflective and active learning skills, primarily based on the use of storytelling by the students to create stories and reflect on their learning as a group. Last, podcasts were created by location-

based students to evaluate and share their acquired experience and made use of audio guides to help them carry out their fieldwork.

### **3.4. The use of podcasts to learn English**

As it has been previously shown, podcasting has resulted to be a powerful tool to use in education and particularly in the English language classroom. As revealed by Hasan & Bee Hoon (2013), language learning has been widely recognised as one of the fields which make the most out of podcasting, with researches that conclude podcasts can greatly help develop learners' language skills, especially in developing learners' speaking and listening skills. A wide range of audio recordings can be found on the Internet like podcasts from TV, radio programs and even classroom podcasts designed for specific language learning purposes.

In addition, along these lines, Devia & García explain about podcasts, motivation and language skills that:

The use of podcasts is said to have the capability of improving students' motivation (Hegelheimer and O-Bryan, 2007) and attitudes towards the class (Li, 2010), and when implemented as a form of cooperative work can also enhance students understanding of the subject matter and improve students interaction (Stoltenkamp et al. 2011). Furthermore, the implementation of Podcasts has also reportedly shown good results boosting students' listening and speaking proficiency (Lu, 2007). (2017, p.37)

Therefore, podcasts seem to be a positive tool for the learning process within the classrooms. As mentioned before in this chapter, there are several types of podcasts that can be used in the ESL class. On the one hand, teachers and students can have access to podcasts on the Internet with the aim of enhancing the listening skill, such as those produced by BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and other "Independent podcasts" are Web-based podcasts produced by individuals and organizations (Sze, 2006). On the other hand, it is the second type which can have more potential and possibilities in the English class. Here, it is the learners who create the podcasts by means of free and easy software and applications such as *Audacity*, a mobile recorder or *Anchor*. Then,

students are able to practice and enhance their oral skills since they can listen to their own speech and realise about their mistakes. Also, it is quite useful for the teacher since they can assess more accurately any speaking activity. Moreover, as in other subjects, they can create podcasts that also supplement the classes for different purposes. They allow teachers to reach out to their students beyond the confines of the classroom (Sze, 2006).



## **4. STATE OF THE ART**

During the past recent years there have been published numerous studies and articles on how podcasting might enhance the learners' performance in the EFL classroom. Here some insight is given about how podcasts can be used to improve the students' oral skills, as well as *Anchor*, the application that is going to be used in the project.

### **4.1. The use of podcasts to improve oral skills**

To begin with, a number of recent studies agree that the podcast is a very positive tool to implement in the English classroom with the aim of improving the learners speaking skills. An instance of this is what is stated in the study by Hasan & Bee Hoon: "podcasts can accelerate language learners' learning not just in listening but also in other language areas such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, speaking and related learning activities" (2013, p.130). In this article, the authors mention studies on podcasts for developing students' pronunciation by Ducate and Lomicka or Knight. In both cases, the results were favourable and students demonstrated an improvement not only in their pronunciation but also in their attitude towards English language learning.

Furthermore, another study carried out by Devia & Garcia (2017) demonstrated that several students from Colombia showed signs of speaking improvement. Learners were able to improve their abilities mainly in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and fluency. Vocabulary was reportedly acquired with ease, as well as the grammar, which was corrected after students identified their own mistakes in the recordings. They also gained confidence and self-regulated their own learning processes, so they showed excellent awareness, hard work and commitment with the task (Devia & Garcia, 2017).

Besides, an activity was developed for students of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, based on a magazine podcast in which students can practice their English speaking skill, among the others like writing and listening (McMinn, 2008). Here a community of English speakers was created on the campus to provide interesting and entertaining information for students. They acknowledged the importance of authentic and simulated environments used as

a speaking rehearsal for them so, as a result, this led to the increase of motivation for second language learning as well as creativity.

At the same time, the authors also agree that after the introduction of podcasts in the subject curriculum, students felt more motivated and confident when using the English language. First of all, the fact that using a new technological tool in the classroom simply contributes to increase the student motivation and curiosity and enhance the learning experience (Phillips, 2017). Additionally, according to Sze (2007), as podcasts can be easily accessed by almost anyone from anywhere, the creators face a real audience so, it is an actual motivating factor. Similarly, one of the conclusions obtained in the study by Hasan & Bee Hoon (2013) is that the integration of podcasting learning can undoubtedly improve motivation and promote learning since the majority of the participants showed positive attitudes towards this new learning technique.

#### **4.2. The application: *Anchor***

After going through the literature review, *Anchor* is an application which allows students to easily access and create their own audios. One of the advantages of *Anchor* is that the software is compatible with mobile devices and computers so, audio can be recorded from a PC with an optimal microphone or directly from the teacher or students' mobile phone (Android or iPhone). This application was launched in 2016 with the objective of making the audio creation and distribution processes more easily for people with no professional recording devices.

The most important feature of *Anchor* is that the service provided is completely free, with no charges for storage, nor trial periods nor strings attached. What is more, no advertisements appear when the software is running. Therefore, its use in class would be perfect because no barriers for teachers and students are encountered.

Moreover, the simplicity of this application makes the audio distribution very easy. Recordings can be shared in every major podcast platform, including Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Spotify. Also, if desired, podcasts can even be monetised in a comfortable way because the application takes care of the process itself. Users can have insight about their podcasts with straightforward analytics as well in order to track their podcast's performance and success.

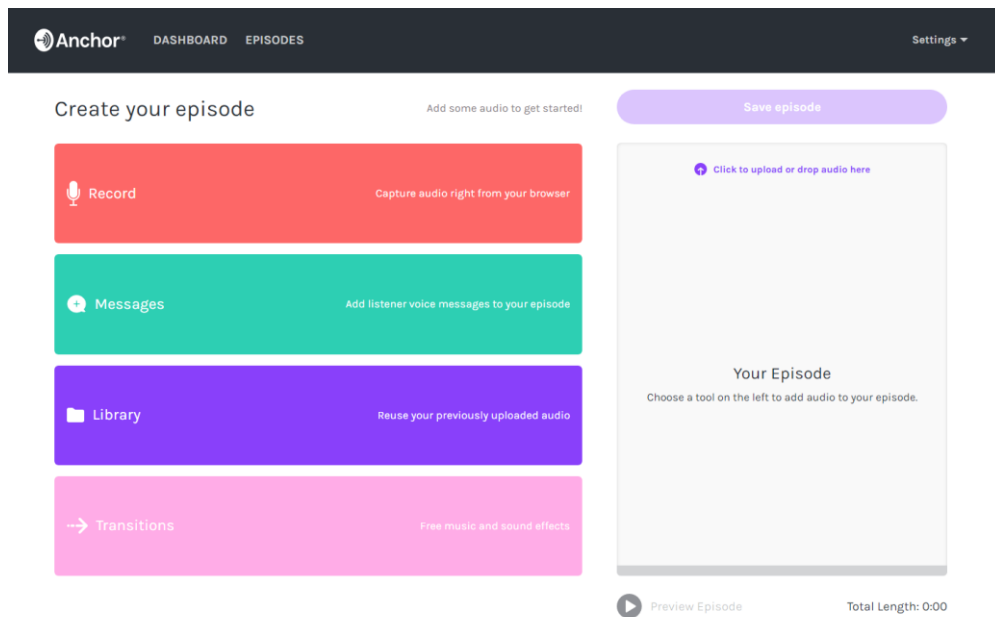


Figure 1. Anchor interface

As it can be seen in Figure 1, the interface is very user-friendly and easy to understand and manage. Students would find this appealing so they would be more motivated and engaged, contributing positively as a result to the activity development.

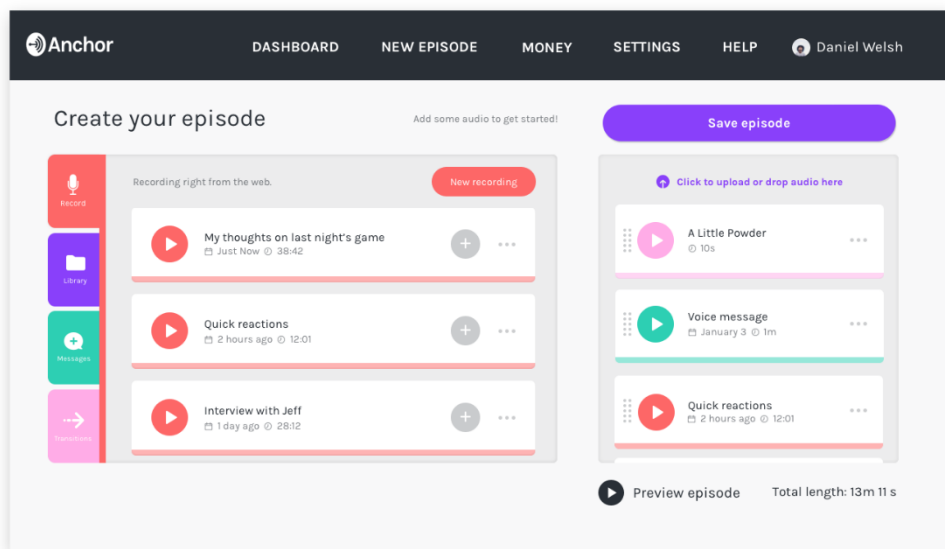


Figure 2. Podcast editing

The display of the options within the application is quite clear with several possible options of podcast editing. The timeline with the tracks is shown on the

right, where users can edit the duration and starting point of the recordings as well as adding quick funny transitions and sound effects that eventually make the podcast more interesting.



## 5. INTERVENTION PROPOSAL

### 5.1. Overview

By means of this proposal, students would be creating podcasts in class with the intention of practicing their speaking and therefore, enhancing their oral skills. As previously shown in the theoretical framework and the state of the matter, the introduction of ICTs and podcasts, in this case, can contribute positively to the teaching and learning processes.

In brief, after introducing the project to the class, one of the aims of podcasting is to make students feel motivated to practice the foreign language and learn about the speaking strategies in order to be expressive and eloquent. Speaking could be regarded as the most difficult skill to master for most learners so, some factors that cause this difficulty must be taken into account before designing the project, such as inhibition and worry for making mistakes, having no motive to express, low or uneven participation and tendency to use the mother-tongue (Al Hosni, 2014). Hence, in order to properly carry out the project, an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration must be created between the peers so that they feel motivated to complete the tasks.

Additionally, this project based on podcasts aims to foster their creativity and create curiosity. Through teamwork, the pupils will have to choose topics and invent a story, radio program, songs or other situations that would eventually be recorded for the team's podcast. Besides, the use of the application *Anchor* to record their conversations has the purpose of arousing curiosity about the use of technological devices and the proper use of internet.

Once the teams have recorded their podcasts, those would be played to the whole class as a listening activity. By doing this, a background of meaningful learning is created because then students have in mind that they are working on something with a purpose. Obviously, students are expected to make the most of the in-class time and make an extra effort to have a satisfactory outcome.

All in all, this proposal is focused on fostering the peers' oral skills, however, other skills such as reading, writing would be performed at the time of the topic research and design of the podcast. Subsequently, the podcast playing is designed so that they have a little listening activity.

## 5.2. Target group

This innovation proposal is designed for a group of students in 1<sup>st</sup> Baccalaureate level. This is the optimal stage to perform this project since it is needed an intermediate/upper-intermediate level of proficiency in the English language, although students with a lower level or special necessities would naturally have their place in the activity.

The level of maturity is ideal for this kind of project, much nearer to the adulthood, due to their age (around sixteen-year-olds). Though, the pre-university course could not be recommended because students would be more focused on the type of exercises needed for their university entry exams.

## 5.3. Materials

The principal tool to be used is the web and mobile application *Anchor.fm*. This was chosen due to its dynamism and design possibilities. It is available for both computer and mobile devices, so it can be used in the informatics room or just in the class with the peers' mobile phones or tablets.

Students would find it easy to get started with this application because they just need to create an account. One of the advantages is that no payment is required, and it is also free of annoying advertisements. What is more, the application offers unlimited free hosting, so users have no storage limits nor trial periods, and of course, no limit of podcasts.

If learners are signing up in mobile devices it would be rather simple for them to get used to *Anchor's* mechanics. As soon as they get in, several tips and starting guides will appear in which students get to understand all the features the application offers, including searching, listening and reacting to other podcasts, recording and editing, and sharing the podcast. In the mobile version more options are available to use, for instance, the use of songs during the recording or more sounds to use as transitions. All in all, these features promote dynamic engagement as well as creativity because students can make the most of hundreds of possibilities while creating the content and editing.

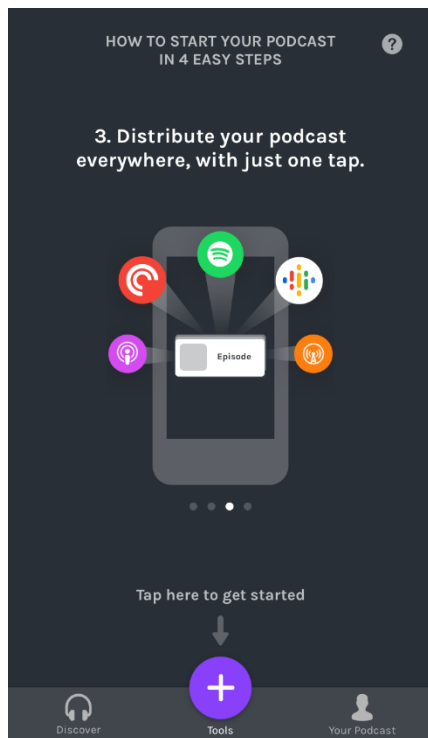


Figure 3. Starting guide

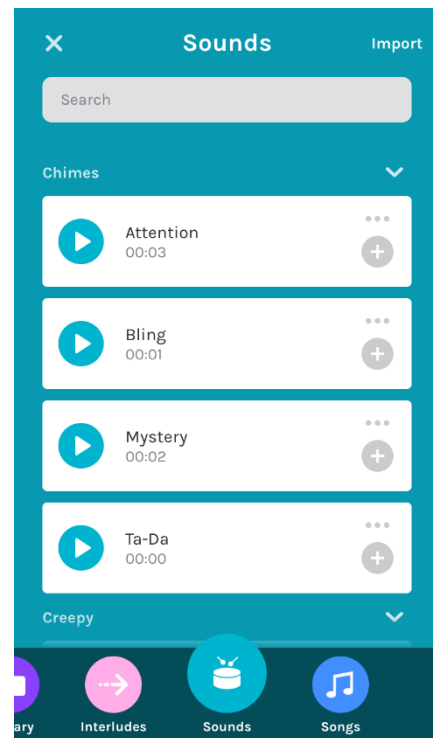


Figure 4. Sounds and effects

## 5.4. Methodology

The methodology used for the correct functioning of this project is naturally aimed to provide an adequate environment for the fostering the speaking skills of 1<sup>st</sup> Baccalaureate students. For that, the use of technology in the class is key, because not only it favours the progress of the activity, but also it makes students to be more engaged in their tasks.

Here, students would have an active role within the class because the teacher dictates the activities' guidelines which they should follow. Considering the level of 1<sup>st</sup> Baccalaureate, students are more ready to undergo individual work and individual learning. Besides, teamwork is to be fostered because peers would be joining groups of three people in order to complete the activities. Then, they must learn how to think as a group, collaborate and cooperate with each other with the aim of obtaining a good result. By working along with others, students should get more confident with themselves and lose a little bit that fear to make mistakes.

On the other hand, the role of the teacher, as stated above, is to guide the students' learning process. Peers would be receiving advices about which topic to choose and how to correctly develop the task. For obvious reasons, English

would be the target language during the project, so all communication or mediation should be done in this foreign language. By doing so, an atmosphere and context is created around the subject which helps the performance of the learning process. Failure to produce a fruitful communication between the teacher and the peers, the language used could be switched to Spanish, the mother-tongue so that students fully understand what they have to do.

The overall teaching methodology could be seen as an intention to carry out a communicative approach within the class. According to Sánchez-Reyes (2011), it is a learner-focused approach and makes use of contextualised real-life situations with meaningful topics. Therefore, students feel the desire to communicate, practicing as a result this pragmatic, functional use of language. Within this project, this would be accomplished through the use of podcasts that would eventually be listened by other people (a communicative purpose).

### **5.5. Objectives**

As stated before in this paper, the main objective of this proposal is to practice speaking in order to enhance the 1<sup>st</sup> Baccalaureate student's oral skills. Apart from this one, there are other several specific objectives that are going to be the following:

- a. Fostering creativity.
- b. Augmenting the students' motivation.
- c. Inspire students to participate actively in class.
- d. Encouraging teamwork.
- e. Creating a friendly and comfortable learning environment.
- f. Having an approach to ICTs in the English classroom.

Essentially, according to the *Real Decreto 1105/2014, de 26 de diciembre, por el que se establece el currículo básico de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y del Bachillerato*, this project would develop some of the competences that appear in the curriculum:

- a. Linguistic communication competence.
- b. Digital competence.
- c. Learning to learn.
- d. Entrepreneurship competence.

The first one is the most important, since the overall project is focused on the students' speaking skills. They should learn and be aware of how to produce a clear and eloquent oral discourse. Moreover, peers would learn about acquiring new knowledge by themselves by means of technological devices and group work.

## **5.6. Contents**

As stated in *Decreto 21/2015, de 26 de junio, por el que se establece el currículo de Bachillerato y se regulan determinados aspectos sobre su organización, evaluación, promoción y titulación del alumnado de la Comunidad Autónoma de La Rioja*, the main contents that would be addressed during the project are related to the comprehension and production of oral texts.

As for the oral text comprehension block, it is basic since students must be able to recognise and understand the main and general ideas of the information provided by their classmates. The contents included are:

- Previous use of the task's information.
- Distinguishing the general and more precise information.
- Organising the communication and discourse.
- Hypotheses creation about content and context.
- Information exchange, opinions, beliefs, advices, etc...

On the other hand, and most importantly, the contents related to the oral text production, that is, the speaking part are:

- Producing a message with clarity and coherence, having into account the main ideas and basic linguistic structures.
- Adequating the expression to the context and the addressee.
- Making the most of previous knowledge.
- Asking for help.
- Expressing curiosity, doubts and certainty.
- Expressing willingness, intention, decision, promise and order.
- Expressing interest, approval, admiration, satisfaction and hope.
- Expressing suggestions, desires and hypotheses.

## 5.7. Duration

The duration of this proposal would take place during one trimester and, more specifically, the last one. This is because during the last part of the course, students can make the most of the majority of the linguistic and lexical contents acquired during the past two trimesters so that they can use them in the tasks.

After the experience I have in education, some aspects should be taken into account before organising the timing such as bank holidays, festivities and other school activities. In fact, exams and final course projects from other subjects, as well as the texts and exams of the same English subject should also be considered because they could take some sessions from the scheduled timetable. Therefore, this project is organised for a trimester of 8 weeks, so one class each week would be devoted to the project's activities. It also should be mentioned that the duration of the classes is estimated to be around 50 minutes of duration.

## 5.8. Intervention structure

The lessons and activities included in this proposal are designed to reach the objectives stated before in this chapter. In this section, each session is going to be explained considering the aims, organisation, objectives, materials and suitable descriptions. The following table is going to clearly show how the sessions are distributed within the entire trimester.

TRIMESTER OVERVIEW				
	1 <sup>st</sup> Session	2 <sup>nd</sup> Session	3 <sup>rd</sup> Session	4 <sup>th</sup> Session
Week 1	N. session	N. session	N. session	Introduction
Week 2	N. session	N. session	N. session	Information searching
Week 3	N. session	N. session	N. session	Topic decision and script design
Week 4	N. session	N. session	N. session	Script design
Week 5	N. session	N. session	N. session	Recording session
Week 6	N. session	N. session	N. session	Recording session
Week 7	N. session	N. session	N. session	Listening
Week 8	N. session	N. session	N. session	Listening

Table 1. Trimester overview. (Note: 'N. session' means normal session).

As for the assessment criteria shown for each activity, they are fundamental to assess the students' learning process. They are chosen for each activity in relation to the learning standards, which help defining those criteria and making it more precise to do the final project assessment.

#### 5.8.1. Session 1

This first session is devoted to the explanation of the project. Students must understand the objectives of the overall project and any possible doubts should be solved and cleared in order to save time and avoid future mistakes and misunderstandings. Further, oral presentation advises would be given to the students so that they can correctly put them to use and make the most of it.

Finally, there would be some time dedicated to making the groups. It is important to clarify that the optimal number of members per group would be three or four people. Moreover, the teacher must take into account the language level of the students in order to create groups with similar competences when using and working with the English language.

This session could be performed in the classroom and making use of materials such as a computer and a projector so that students have every aspect of the project's explanation clear.

Activities	Duration	Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Project presentation. Explanation of steps and objectives.	15 minutes	Presenting a broad view of the project. Doubts solving.	Willingness to learn. Asking doubts if any and active involvement in the class.
2. Advises and strategies about how to produce an efficient and clear speech.	25 minutes	Making students realise about how to be eloquent when having a conversation, recording or speaking in front of an audience.	Willingness to learn. Asking doubts if any and active involvement in the class.

3. Group the students into several work teams.	10 minutes	Creating groups according to their own choices and language skills.	-
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Table 2. Session 1.

### 5.8.2. Session 2

The following week's session would be dedicated to the search of information by the students with the purpose of choosing a topic. This class should be conducted in the informatics room because peers need to use computers to enter the internet and start investigating for their podcast content. Nonetheless, other devices such as mobile phones or tablets could also be used, so the session could be performed as well in the classroom.

Activities	Duration	Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Looking for a topic and searching for information.	50 minutes	<p>Fostering cooperative working in groups.</p> <p>Reflecting on how the foreign language works and appreciate it as a tool to access information and learning.</p> <p>Learning how to use technological devices such as a computer to look for information.</p>	<p>Active involvement in the activity.</p> <p>Cooperative when working in groups.</p> <p>Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.</p>

Table 3. Session 2.

### 5.8.3. Session 3

The third session would be entirely about the final decision of each group's topic and commencing to create the content of the podcasts, everything in the



informatics room as well. Now, students should think a little bit out of the box and come up with interesting and creative ideas for their content. If they like their topic they would enjoy the creation process and, eventually, it would increase the group's motivation to complete the task.

Some good ideas could be writing a script about a conversation, a radio programme, a narrated story or news programme.

Activities	Duration	Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Topic decision and starting the script design.	50 minutes	Fostering cooperative working in groups.  Developing both autonomous learning and teamwork skills.	Active involvement in the activity.  Cooperative when working in groups.  Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.  Ready to ask doubts if any.

Table 4. Session 3.

#### 5.8.4. Session 4

In the session the week after, the time would be spent on continuing the script design. Having two sessions is proper and beneficial for the outcome of their work because they should have enough time to complete this designing activity as well as to ask for doubts and help if needed.

Activities	Duration	Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Script design.	50 minutes	Fostering cooperative working in groups.  Developing both autonomous learning and teamwork skills.	Active involvement in the activity.  Cooperative when working in groups.  Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.

		Compiling information and writing it effectively.	Ready to ask doubts if any.
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Table 5. Session 4.

#### 5.8.5. Session 5

During the 5<sup>th</sup> session, students are required to start their recordings. This session and the next are crucial for the entire project since it is now when peers put into practice not only the knowledge they have acquired during the course but also the one obtained during the time spent on this project.

The first part of the class, which would last around 15 minutes, would be oriented to make the initial decisions about the recordings. Each group must analyse the information and the scripts they have compiled and create a strategy to do the recording more effectively. If students have a clear idea about what they need to do beforehand, they will eventually save or gain time when completing the activities.

During the following 45 minutes, all the groups should start recording their podcasts. By the time they commence, students should have agreed whether they do it on a computer or in a mobile device. For this, they are given the possibilities of being alone in the informatics room, or in the classroom or sharing it with other groups. What we are actually looking for here is to create an optimal environment to successfully complete the activity.

Activities	Duration	Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Recording decisions.	15 minutes	Making sure every group has their task done.  Arguing about how to tackle the recording activity and having a strategy.	Active involvement in the activity.  Cooperative when working in groups.  Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.

2. Start recording.	45 minutes	Acquiring comfort and confidence when using English as a second language.  Learning how to speak eloquently when recording.	Active involvement in the activity.  Speaking fluently.  Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.
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Table 6. Session 5.

#### 5.8.6. Session 6

The following week's session would be about the continuation of the groups' podcasts recordings. During this class students ought to record their podcasts with a minimum of 5 minutes and a maximum of 15.

Naturally, should the teacher see some of the peers show difficulties to complete the activity, some aid will be provided. They are also allowed to ask for help anytime about whatever problem that might arise. Students just have to feel comfortable when using the foreign language in order to transmit general information, a narration, jokes or even songs (just anything they have come up with). This is strongly connected to motivation because learners need opportunities to express what they need with a supportive atmosphere without being threatened (Al Hosni, 2014).

Activities	Duration	Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Continue recording and editing.	50 minutes	Acquiring comfort and confidence when using English as a second language.  Learning how to speak eloquently when recording.	Active involvement in the activity.  Speaking fluently.  Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.

Table 7. Session 6.

### 5.8.7. Session 7

In this session, the last part of the project starts. Students must finish their podcast recordings and edition processes. According to the schedule, they should have already finished their recordings, although some groups may be delayed with their work. In this case, they can surely have more time to finish it. Moreover, they should submit the resulting mp3 track to the teacher so that the assessment can be done.

During the second part of this session, the listening activity would start. Thus, students would listen to their peers' podcasts and start a discussion about their opinions about the result of their classmates and about the matter at hand.

Activities	Duration	Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Finishing the recordings if needed. Submission to the teacher and classmates.	20 minutes	Completing the activity. Making sure every group has their task done.	Active involvement in the activity. Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.
2. Listening activity.	30 minutes	Comprehending general information from an oral text. Developing skills on critical thinking.	Willingness to learn. Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.

Table 8. Session 7.

### 5.8.8. Session 8

Finally, the last session would continue with the listening activity for around 30 minutes. After this, the last part of the 8<sup>th</sup> session and of the entire project would be dedicated to the assessment of the project. The teacher would give constructive feedback for each team in order they get to know their most common mistakes.

Moreover, learners would be handed an assessment sheet so that they can rate their feelings when working in groups for the completion of this project.

Therefore, they can have the chance to reflect on the progress they have made during the recording of the podcasts.

Activities	Duration	Objectives	Assessment Criteria
1. Listening activity.	30 minutes	Comprehending general information from an oral text. Developing skills on critical thinking.	Willingness to learn. Speaks with peers and respects their ideas or decisions.
2. Assessing the project.	20 minutes	Reflecting about their own learning process after the project completion.	Active involvement in the activity.

Table 9. Session 8.

## 5.9. Assessment

The assessment designed for this project is composed by two main parts. The first one is aimed to objectively assess the learners' linguistic performance in the podcasts, whereas the second part is focused on the students' attitude towards the activities.

The weight of this project over the overall subject mark is that of 25% because its main purpose is to assess their speaking skills. Out of that, 20% of the mark is assessing their oral skills, while in contrast, the remaining 5% is focused on the learner's attitude.

On the other hand, as mentioned before, students will have to complete a sort of questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire for the teacher is to know the students' opinions and feelings about their work done during the project. This could be very helpful in case there are any weakness in the intervention's design so that the teacher would be able to solve it.

In order to effectively perform the assessment, some rubrics were created, as it can be seen in the appendix below. They show the basic assessment criteria in relation with some learning standards that help to understand and label those criteria.



## 6. DISCUSSION

This innovative project is aimed to design a technology-based intervention proposal to help students improve their speaking skills by means of recording podcasts. Obviously, after all the planning and activity making for the possible intervention in a school, some potential advantages will arise as well as disadvantages. This section is going to provide some insight about all these factors that can lead the project to success or failure.

On the one hand, after considering all the aspects shown in the theoretical background and state of the matter, this proposal is expected to present a few advantages for the teaching and learning processes. Firstly, students would feel more motivated to accomplish the activities due to the freedom that the application, *Anchor*, offers. Therefore, using technological devices such as computers, smart phones or tablets is directly linked to this motivation increase. Moreover, podcasting and *Anchor* are rather easy technologies to use because students only need a voice recorder software and internet so, the proposed activities are more prone to be successfully accomplished. According to Jain & Hashmi, by using podcasts in ELT, “it offers them opportunity to enthusiastically respond to teachers and the levels of their learning speeds up desirably” (2013, p.161).

Additionally, producing podcasts gives students the possibility of rehearsing their speech, so as a result, they can listen to themselves and be aware of the pronunciation mistakes they make. Thus, podcasts can be created by different students according to their capacities, as, for instance, offering help to less confident students. By using the internet, they can share their own content to a large audience.

On the other hand, there are also quite a few disadvantages that may arise during the implementation of this proposal. One of the main disadvantages is time constraints. Everything is set for the final trimester of 1<sup>st</sup> Baccalaureate course so, students could be a little distracted due to the approach of the course’s end and other subjects’ final exams and tests. Even though this has been taken into account, the situation could cause some setbacks for the project completion. As a result, it could be carried out in other periods or trimesters during the same course. Besides, some students could be off the recommended working pace

previously shown in the intervention section. This could entail a drag for the rest of the groups and endanger the overall completion of all the project's activities.

Moreover, another disadvantage is that the content section is not really clear because students are supposed to make use of all the previous grammatical and lexical knowledge they have acquired. This is a disadvantage because at the time of assessing the students, it is a little bit difficult to be fully objective. However, the assessment grids designed for this proposal are as objective as possible.

Also, learners who have a common mother tongue always tend to use it anytime, specially if they do not feel comfortable using a foreign language or they have difficulties when trying to express a concrete idea. Therefore, the teacher must encourage students to use the target language, even during the podcast creation process in order to make the most of the in-class time and practice with the English language.



## 7. CONCLUSION

After the completion of this project, we have reached the conclusion that the speaking skill is key in mastering a language. Thus, students can only become proficient with language after a lot of practice and having a source of motivation. This is clearly stated in this paper's literature review, where authors claim that using technological solutions in the class is beneficial for learners as well as for the teaching process.

The intervention proposal of this project presents how students can overcome any learning difficulty by practicing their speaking skills using *Anchor* as a podcast creating tool. Moreover, the fact that the activities are designed so that students work in groups and communicate between them is absolutely profitable. Learners should learn how to efficiently work with others in order to obtain a common favourable result. Of course, this could only be reached after a friendly and comfortable atmosphere is established between all the peers. This is when they start loosening themselves and speak without fright to make mistakes.

The discussion provided before comes up with some possible ideas and solutions that could be taken after been aware of the disadvantages that might arise during the school intervention. Everything must be considered if a favourable result is pursued.

The task design as well as choosing the right timing and assessment criteria were quite challenging decisions because a teacher must have into account all possible variables that might happen during the project's performance. As well, more difficulty is added when having into account the special attention that should be offered to those with disability and other disorders. Equity and other democratic values should always be implicit. Anyway, we believe that we have acquired a good experience when it comes to be innovative in the EFL classroom by making use of technology.

After the process of working in this paper, I realise that I have become aware of the challenges that entail trying to be innovative in education. If a valuable education is wanted in this country, all that we need to do is try new ways to be effective while adapting to the new sociocultural challenges that currently appear.



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## 9. APPENDIX

### 1. Speaking assessment grid

	<b>DISTINCTION</b>	<b>NOTABLE</b>	<b>PASS</b>	<b>FAIL</b>
<b>Grammar and vocabulary (25%)</b>	Expression with no mistakes. Makes use of a wide range of verbs and vocabulary.	Some mistakes but presents a fair control of the language.	Uses some of the verbs, grammatical structures and a few words from the vocabulary.	Speaking with lots of grammatical mistakes and no structural logic.
<b>Fluency (25%)</b>	Proficient fluency.	Fluent with syntactical constructions and vocabulary.	Presents some difficulties when trying to communicate in English.	Not able to express a message or idea in the target language.
<b>Pronunciation (25%)</b>	Masters the pronunciation and the use of the language.	Presents moderate control over the word pronunciation.	Presents difficulties in pronunciation.	Not able to properly pronounce English words.
<b>Interactive communication (25%)</b>	Fluent and agile when conversating with peers.	Can establish a conversation.	Presents some difficulties when trying to communicate with others.	Cannot communicate with peers.

Table 10. Speaking assessment grid.

## 2. Learner's attitude assessment grid

	<b>DISTINCTION</b>	<b>NOTABLE</b>	<b>PASS</b>	<b>FAIL</b>
<b>Organisation (15%)</b>	Extremely well organised.	Usually well organised.	Frequently organised.	Total lack of organisation.
<b>Teamwork (35%)</b>	Enthusiastic about working with peers.	Willing to work with peers. Contributes positively to the activity.	Occasionally disrupts.	Unwilling to work with others. Distracts his/her teammates.
<b>Behaviour (25%)</b>	Enthusiastic.	Polite and respectful.	Sometimes distracted.	Inattentive, disengaged, and distracted.
<b>Contribution and involvement (25%)</b>	Always involved. Initiates discussion.	Focused and involved.	Will participate with insistence.	Refuses to participate.

Table 11. Learner's attitude assessment grid.